Creatures of the night come alive on new CD

Steve Brown
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Everyone loves a good scare — that's why horror films have done a booming business, from "Dracula" to "Psycho" to "Scream."

In some cases, the music was terrifying enough by itself. One can't forget the screeching violins "stabbing" through the "Psycho" score or the eerie supernatural air of "Tubular Bells" from "The Exorcist." Even the haunting piano strains from the "Halloween" theme can paint a gruesome mental image.

Three Clevelanders — composers Ed Douglas and Gavin Goszka and graphic artist Joseph Vargo — have tried to capture similar thought-provoking tones on a local CD, "Born of the Night." Designed especially for the Halloween season, the CD is a collection of gothic instrumentals that blend dark orchestration and sound effects.

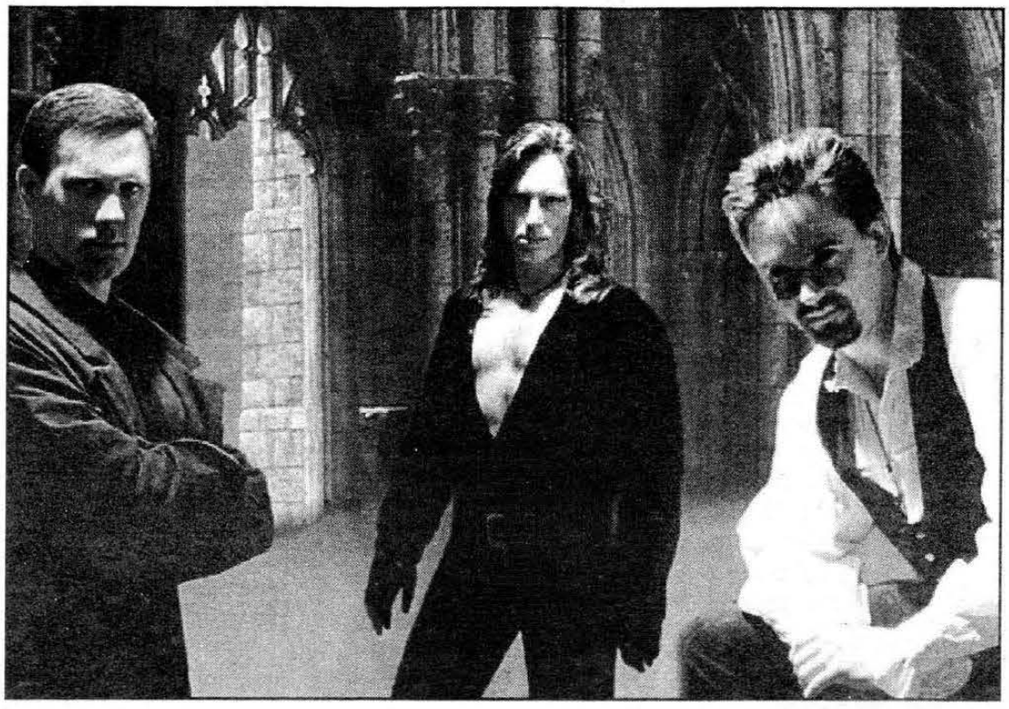
Douglas is the founder of Midnight Syndicate, a group that produced a CD of "cinefusion" music in October 1997.

Douglas described "cinefusion" in a January article in the Chronicle as "taking a variety of musical genres and blending them with movie soundtrack stylings." Basically, Douglas and his colleagues were creating miniature soundtracks for movies that don't exist.

Vargo, who distributes his lithographs and print wear through his company, Monolith Graphics, suggested the first meeting between the two parties.

"Joe had heard the first CD," said Douglas. "He thought the first one was too eclectic — that I needed to be more focused on the next effort. He approached me about doing a Halloween CD."

"I was marketing my own stuff," said Vargo. "I had several avenues to market items.



MEMBERS OF MIDNIGHT SYNDICATE: From left to right, Ed Douglas, Joseph Vargo, Gavin Goszka.

Paintings, T-shirts, calendars and soundtracks ... I thought they fit perfectly together."

At this same time, Goszka had been working with Douglas on the Midnight Syndicate project.

"We had been acquaintances," said Douglas. "We were a perfect mesh, very compatible. We had a great relationship."

Vargo's artwork was used as an inspiration for the composers to create the music. According to Douglas, Vargo plays an even bigger role in the project.

"His input was critical," said Douglas. "He steered the creative direction of the CD and kept us focused. We trusted him completely."

Vargo admitted it was hard at times to have the right atmosphere for creativity.

"Here we're trying to create this dark music and we had all these sunny days," laughed Vargo. "We had to close all the doors and pull down the shades so we could work."

The artist also created all of the artwork for the CD and provided voices for some of the selections.

Both Douglas and Vargo readily agree that the project is a success.

"We ended up with a gothic soundtrack, not just a Halloween CD," said Vargo. "Everybody has a dark side to explore. This project will stimulate the imagination."

Vargo started devoting his attention to his work full time in 1991. But he was always fascinated with gothic stuff.

"I loved it," said Vargo. "I watched 'Dark Shadows' and the old horror movies. I went to school to be a fantasy illustrator, but it wasn't for me. I taught myself and eventually started my own business with my girlfriend (Christine Filipak)."

The business rapidly grew from selling T-shirts at renaissance fairs and designing CD covers for local bands such as Cryptkicker.

"It kept expanding," said Vargo. "I decided to put all my efforts into doing my graphics."

As for the CD, sales are going good.

"It's very successful," said Douglas. "It's even being sold in gaming stores. 'Ravenloft,' a Dungeons & Dragons-based game, is very gothic. Players have found the CD a good soundtrack to play to."

The CD can also be purchased through the website for Entity Productions, Douglas' entertainment company. Click on at *http:/www.entityprod.com.*